

## **Status of NH National Guard deployed units as of Aug. 31 , 2004**

Total number of NH National Guardsmen: 2,700

NH Army National Guard: 1,700. 900+ mobilized.  
800 in Iraq, 75 in Afghanistan, 27 preparing for Sept. mobilization for OIF.  
30 at Pease Air National Guard Base

NH Air National Guard: 1,000. 69 mobilized  
16 in Iraq, 1 in Afghanistan, 52 at locations in U.S.

Number of NH Guardsmen overseas: 890

**1. C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment (Mountain), based in Manchester.**

- a. Eight soldiers in Afghanistan since September 2003 training and patrolling with members of the Afghan National Army. Expected return early this September.
- b. 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security and patrol operations.

**2. 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, based in Hillsboro, with armories in Claremont and Somersworth.** 150 soldiers in Iraq conducting transportation missions.

**3. Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester.** 110 soldiers in Iraq. The unit is a command and control element for three battalions conducting security missions.

**4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Berlin with armories in Lancaster, Littleton, Plymouth, Woodsville, Lebanon and Franklin.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.

**5. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester with armories in Rochester, Portsmouth, Milford and Nashua.**

- a. 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.
- b. 30 soldiers of Charlie Battery, from the Portsmouth Armory, augmenting security operations at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.

**6. 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment, based in Peterborough.** 50 soldiers in Afghanistan providing engineering and construction support for Operation Enduring Freedom.

**7. Logistics Readiness Squadron, 157<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, based at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington.** Five airmen returned from Iraq on Aug. 17, after six months supporting U.S. Army missions. Maj. Michael Mawson in Afghanistan.

**8. 260<sup>th</sup> Air Traffic Control from Pease/ JFHQ.** 15 air traffic controllers and one member of Joint Forces Headquarters in Iraq.

**9. Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.** 17 NH Army National Guard soldiers representing different units and specialties in Afghanistan to provide mentorship to Afghan National Army in a variety of fields.

\* **Note:** 3643<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Company, based in Concord has provided more than half its guardsmen to augment deploying units.

## **UPDATES FROM UNIT COMMANDERS IN THEATER**

*Editor's Note: The following updates were emailed by the unit commanders. They were slightly edited for grammar and operational security.*

### **744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company**

***Capt. Mary Bergner**, of Hampton, is commander of the 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. The unit arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission has been to transport dry goods, water, food, petroleum products and general supplies to ground units.*

Summer is almost over in New England and for the first time I can say that it could not have gone quick enough.

This month has found us back on sustainment missions and has challenged the most motivated of soldiers. With the sustainment missions have come attacks on our convoys. We regained our gun trucks and the soldiers are once again manning them with fervor.

We have picked up a new run and with the long miles come the breaking of complacency of the same old routes. We had our first convoy out to this new destination attacked with what is referred to as a "compound attack."

The first enemy action was an IED that exploded near one of our trucks, which was driven by Spec. Robert Ryder, of Manchester, and the TC or truck commander was Sgt. Rich Capen, of Weare.

Ryder sustained minor face wounds and proceeded out of the kill zone. The second part of the attack was an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) fired at the convoy and barely missing another of our trucks driven by Staff Sgt. David Parker of Weare and TC, Sgt. Roger Gingrich of Concord.

The two trucks remained in control while the convoy also received small arms fire. The maintenance team did an outstanding job assessing the situation, hooking the vehicle (for tow) and getting the convoy moving to its first designated location where Ryder and Capen were treated and returned for duty.

Once again the leadership and soldiers were amazing in their controlled approach to dealing with the situation and accomplishing the mission.

We suffered another incident when direct fire from a 107mm rocket was received in our living area (base camp). The rocket landed in proximity to one of our supply conex's and our 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon living tents.

Staff Sgt. Scott Robins, of Lisbon, received shrapnel wounds to his leg while he was doing an accountability check of his soldiers in one of the tents. He remained in control even with the, I am sure, unbearable pain.

Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mark Roberts, of Charlestown, retrieved a field dressing to cover his wound, until Staff Sgt. Keith Irwin, of Somersworth and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Philip Tirrell, of Salisbury, (who is a trained combat life-saver and full-time EMT/firefighter in his civilian job) attended to Robin's injuries until the ambulance and MP's arrived at the scene.

All soldiers deserve to be commended for their prompt and calm actions. Robbins had surgery on his leg here at our base camp (Anaconda) and was medevaced to Germany where he will receive further medical treatment.

A few days after the attack, our battalion, which is right next door to us, suffered some significant damage to a building. Thankfully, no one was seriously hurt and it has quieted down over the past week.

Two other 744th soldiers that were near the supply conex received minor injuries. Sgt. Anna Anelli, of Milan, received a small piece of shrapnel in her shoulder and Sgt. Gregory Sears, of Keene, suffered a piece in his leg. They were both treated and released the same day. Spec. Thomas Hillock, of Winchester, was in the conex with other soldiers and suffered ringing in his ears. He was also treated and returned to duty.

Staff Sgt. Ross Jensen, of Wilton, was the “Iron Man” for the day – shrapnel flew in every direction around him and he did not receive a scratch. The threat of attack being brought to where we sleep brings a new dimension to this operation. The combat stress team here on Anaconda has been invaluable to assure that our soldiers are talking through their fears, feelings, and concerns.

Our soldiers continue to respond to every new situation with great professionalism and courage. The 744<sup>th</sup> soldiers are without a doubt men and women who define the meaning of what/who a soldier is. They are truly warriors. They are only getting better at convoy operations.

Our platoons have improved their living areas. A foos ball table has been obtained and the physical fitness programs have gained momentum.

We continue to run missions at night and the majority of the soldiers have made the adjustment to the new schedule.

Mail continues to arrive on a regular basis and we thank all of you for your outstanding support. We learned of MG Blair’s resignation this month and soldiers and I express our greatest gratitude for the caring leadership that he has demonstrated and lived by during his tenure. We will miss him and we wish him the best of luck on his retirement.

We are up to 85 soldiers that have taken their two-week leave. Every soldier that has returned to duty keeps the smile on their face for weeks afterwards as they share stories of good old New England lobster, steak, the feeling of rain and walking in the beautiful green grass. This does not include the countless stories of great times they had spending with families and all the support the community showed when they discovered that they were home. I thank all the family, friends, employers, state leadership, and communities for standing behind us.

### **Company C, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Regiment) "Mountain Company"**

*Capt. Raymond Valas, of Goffstown, is commander of C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mountain). C Company's missions include dismounted night ambush, movement to contact, cordon and search, route security, and Civil Affairs security. The unit arrived in Iraq in late March.*

C Company continues to have a strong presence in the Balad and Baghdad areas. We have recently seen the addition of another mission to our set. The company is rotating squads down to Baghdad to work with a Civil Affairs team.

While the original mission was simply to provide security for the Civil Affairs officers, the Officer-in-Charge quickly realized that he had received a set of well-rounded and highly trained individuals. After only a few days of working with the first squad, led by Staff Sgt. Michael Lestage, of Manchester, he had expanded the role of the C Company men.

Sgt. Jon Worrall, of Brentwood, a member of the N.H. Small Arms Readiness Training Section, was teaching Iraqi policemen about weapons maintenance and arms room functions. Sgt. Russell Holmes, of Epsom and the Merrimack County Sheriff’s Department, was sought out for advice on training program development. Sgt. Patrick Clarke, of Chichester and the

Chichester Police chief, was brought in to teach some of the new Iraqi policemen along with Sgt. James Tomilson, of Deerfield and a member of the Raymond Police Department.

Spec. Christopher Balch, of Boscowen, became a vehicle maintenance instructor for the new Iraqi policemen after his expertise in the field was realized.

All of this was accomplished while the soldiers were still conducting their original squad mission of security detail. It is a prime example of how the civilian expertise of our N.H. citizen-soldiers adds tremendous value to the military mission and to the people of Iraq.

The men of C Company continue with combat missions in the area north of Baghdad. Several soldiers have recently distinguished themselves while conducting these missions.

While conducting a combat patrol, Sgt. Kent Wyman's (Concord) squad was ambushed by a small force with AK-47 rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. He took control of the situation by establishing security and getting accountability of all Coalition Forces.

Finding one civilian wounded, Wyman directed Spec. Jason Perkins, of Northfield, to render first aid. Realizing that the Iraqi citizen had life threatening injuries from a bullet wound to the chest, Perkins worked hard and stabilized the patient. Perkins had taken the time to learn basic Arabic, and was able to calm the man by explaining the situation and telling him that help was on the way, all in the Arabic language.

This helped to prevent him from going into shock.

Wyman continued to secure the area and called in the medevac helicopter. Because of these two soldiers' commitment to duty, a life was saved. This is just one of the many examples of C Company soldiers continuing to strive for excellence and to make a difference here.

Not all of our achievements are on the battlefield. Spec. Jason Mitchell, of Andover, was selected as the Brigade Maintainer of the Month for his excellence as a mechanic. He was selected from more than 100 maintenance soldiers for his attention to detail, outstanding work ethic, and technical competence. He will receive the Army Commendation Medal for this achievement, to be presented by Col. David Quantock from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Spec. Mitchell has set a high standard and has made all of C Company proud.

## **210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment**

***Capt. Craig Lapiana**, of Merrimack, is commander of the 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment. His unit has been in Afghanistan since early March. The unit is supporting engineer and construction projects.*

We are busy on post and we are starting to do more and more trips into local villages to access the work required to repair or build new schools. Many schools here are still destroyed or do not even exist, but an enormous effort is underway by the U.S. and the Coalition Forces to help rebuild schools for the children to get an education.

Last week we went out to an area that was remote and very close to the mountains which surrounds our base. This particular village has over 500 kids that meet daily under a group of trees for school.

We drove out to see if we could build a school for them but it doesn't look promising due to the rough terrain, which has to be crossed to get to this area. This type of visit really breaks your heart because you want to do something for the village but you know that you don't have the resources.

This particular visit was even harder because of the kindness shown to us as we arrived with the children lined up on each side of the road tossing fresh cut wild flowers onto our vehicle's hoods.

Additional resources from local churches back home would help out with situations like this village as it has with the school we are opened this weekend. It looks like a brand new school, which will support approx. 1,700 children. It cost almost \$30,000 to complete.

This situation was a win-win for everybody involved in that the church body saw the progress of the school each month and saw how good their tithing was being used to directly help the children. Of course the other side of the coin is that the village elders now have a school, which they cherish. They understand and appreciate the effort to help their town's children.

Today we went out to a village about one hour from base to look at another school which needs repairs. It will need to have bullet holes patched up, windows and doors installed and a new roof constructed. The walls are there and that is pretty much it. This school's design and present condition is very similar to the school which we will have the grand opening on this weekend.

The convoy out to these potential school projects is fascinating.

You always see lots of people walking around, boys driving motorcycles, kids on donkeys, lots of people packed into vehicles which could be a horse buggy, an economy sized car or maybe even a "jingle truck".

When I say packed, I mean 10 people in a four-person car, six people on a two-person horse buggy and countless heads and arms sticking out of openings in the bed of a truck. A "jingle truck" is a large vehicle mostly used to carry materials from different locations all over Afghanistan. Many of these trucks are old former Russian vehicles that are still running for the most part.

It is amazing in that you still see many of these trucks started with hand cranks. Yes, I said hand cranks.

These trucks are decorated and painted in all kinds of colors with artistic scenes on the sides of the vehicle and they get their name from the sound you hear from the hundreds of small "dog collar" sized chains that are hanging from the bottom of the vehicle's fenders and undercarriage.

Many of the chains have beads and metal ornaments hanging at the bottom which swing in all directions. It's quite apparent that the drivers take great pride in their trucks and the sounds produced from their elaborate efforts to decorate each vehicle.

Another interesting point along the road is the many little shops that are setup to sell all kinds of products. Each hut is about 10x10 in size and is packed with usually one type of item. So you would visit each shop to get a specific item such as the metal shop for a gate or bed frame; a butcher for lamb or veal and another person for garments.

Money is exchanged and many people also barter for goods. Currently the grape season is here and many types of vegetables are in shacks along side the road. You can find tomatoes, radishes, hot peppers and onions.

Fruits are also being picked. You can find berries, peaches, melons, watermelons and grapes hanging from strings. One thing you won't find is strawberries which most people here don't even know about since it is not grown here. But maybe someday in the near future the children will be able to taste a strawberry for the first time. This will only be possible because of the daily sacrifices being made to ensure a free Afghanistan takes root.

A very big part of the new Afghanistan history is about to take place in the next couple months. For the first time people will be able to vote for their own leader.

Both men and women are registering to vote in record numbers.

The big surprise is the numbers of women, who are making it known that they want to be heard. Amazing in that this is happening in a land in which girls and women were denied the basic rights of education never mind liberties. Each village I visit I ask about their upcoming fall election and everybody is excited and smiles with anticipation to be able to vote. They really want to choose a person who will bring their children into a future without war. Each seems to understand that it will take some time but each expresses that now is the time for change. That now is the time for peace and they appreciate America giving them the opportunity to grow without war. It is when I hear this from the local "rural" people that I feel most proud about the 210th Engineer Detachment being here to protect this fragile wish.

Speaking of being here, we do however have some unit members going home for a much deserved R&R break! This is great for the families and the troops so that each can recharge their spirit to be able to continue on with the fight in completing our mission in this far-off land.

We hear about the rallies and ribbon drives and it helps a lot knowing that people care back home. Keep up the good work and stay strong.

### **Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade**

*Col. James Guise of Tucson, Arizona is commander for HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB, which arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission is to provide command and control of three subordinate field artillery battalions, each is from a different state. Command and control functions include mission assignments, providing and coordinating logistics support, maintaining morale, welfare and unit discipline. The three battalions assigned to HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB are from the West Virginia, South Dakota and South Carolina Army National Guards.*

The 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade has been in theater for almost six months now.

The brigade headquarters and the majority of its three battalions are located in the southeastern part of Iraq near the city of An Nasariyah. There are over 1,300 soldiers under the control of Headquarters & Headquarters Battery, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB. The majority of the brigade is located at Camp Cedar, but we have batteries and sections spread out over 26 remote locations.

Our primary mission has remained the same, the command and control of three artillery battalions.

1-201<sup>st</sup> FA from West Virginia has the primary mission of conducting convoy security for southern Iraq. 2-147<sup>th</sup> FA from South Dakota is securing stock piles of captured enemy ammunition at various sites in southern Iraq and working with civilian contractors so that it can be destroyed. 3-178<sup>th</sup> FA from South Carolina continues to provide security for fixed communication sites. They also provide quick reaction forces to assist units traveling along the main supply route in our area, and relay medevac requests for them in times of emergency.

To date our battalions have driven over 900,000 miles escorting convoys, and have either moved or destroyed over 4,500 tons of captured enemy ammunition.

Last month I highlighted soldiers from our headquarters battery and some of the missions we have conducted jointly or in support of the coalition forces from other countries. This month I would like to share with you some of the other missions we are doing here in Iraq, and profile a few more dedicated soldiers that make this headquarters a great unit.

We have been conducting numerous visits to nearby villages in support of our civil affairs missions to assess how we can improve the lives of the Iraqis. I will discuss some of our projects

later, but first I want to tell you about how one of our soldiers was able to change the lives of a local family forever.

Spec. Ed Martinez, from Madison, is a gun truck driver who frequently provides security for our ad hoc civil affairs team. One day at a village he noticed a one year old boy who was born with a severe birth defect – the child had two club feet. The child would never be able to walk, and lives in a poor village with little access to medical attention.

When Martinez saw the baby, his heart went out to him. He took a picture of the child to the brigade surgeon, Lt. Col. Patrick Tangney, to see what could be done.

Tangney found two surgeons at a nearby air base who were willing and able to help, Col. (first name not available) Krause of the U.S. Air Force, and Capt. (first name not available) Kim of the Republic of Korea army. We drove the family from their village to the Korean hospital at the nearby air base for the initial consultation, which required the use of interpreters to explain the procedure. We also transported them to the Korean army hospital for the actual surgery, after which the child would have to spend five weeks in thigh-high casts and then eight weeks in knee-high casts.

A few days after the surgery, Martinez was able to visit the child when the civil affairs team was checking on the new school we are building in the village. Martinez, along with Spec. Laurie Quick from Londonderry, went to the child's home to see how he was doing. The child was a little fussy due to having to wear the casts, but otherwise he was progressing nicely.

Our two soldiers did not have an interpreter with them, but they could easily understand the gratitude of the mother, which was demonstrated by the warmth and kindness she extended to them.

Since we are a brigade level unit, we have access to funding provided by the Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP). CERP was initiated by the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) to provide reconstruction assistance to the Iraqi people. The money comes from three sources: funds that have been seized during combat operations, funds provided by the U.S. government, and funds established by the United Nations.

The program allows the brigade to spend up to \$200,000 per project. Projects include making improvements to water quality, healthcare, education, and agriculture; as well as many other humanitarian works. This program allows us to provide much needed facilities and services for the Iraqi people, and jobs for them as well. We provide the funding, but local contractors do the work.

This summer our civil affairs team has been busy with four large construction projects. After visiting local villages and meeting with tribal leaders, we identified and prioritized projects to sponsor. One of the first was constructing four kilometers of road connecting two villages to the highway. Roads to villages are unimproved dirt roads, and during the rainy season they are impassable. Often people cannot leave the village, children cannot attend school, and the sick cannot get medical attention. Being a National Guard unit, many of our soldiers have unique civilian job skills that come in handy.

Maj. David Baker from Boylston, Mass, is one of our tactical operations center battle majors, and a construction engineer in his civilian life. He has a wealth of experience building roads back in the United States, and he was able to put that experience to use here. He provided the building specifications for the contract, conducted site inspections, and negotiations with the contractor.

After the road was built, we were able to have a school in the village renovated.

In addition to the renovation project, we are having three new schools built for different villages. This required numerous site visits by our civil affairs team of Lt. Col. Michael

McGandy from Manchester, Capt. Mike Pelletier from Goffstown, and Spec. Laurie Quick from Londonderry.

Other soldiers involved in our civil affairs projects are Maj. Dan Wilson from Concord, who is the contracting officer, and Maj Brian Phillips from Keene, the paying agent. They have had numerous meetings with contractors and sheiks, and have paid out over \$300,000 in cash.

One unique mission came to us as a request from a platoon from the 16<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade. It is sponsoring an Iraqi police station which was in need of four-wheel drive vehicles. The problem they were having was that criminals would leave the highway and escape out into the desert and the police could not chase after them.

We coordinated to buy three, four-wheel drive trucks for the police station. When Maj. Wilson and Maj. Phillips went to the police station to meet the used car salesman, they brought along Master Sgt. Daniel Flint from Sanford, ME, and Spec. Ken Rivard from Berlin.

Flint is the brigade maintenance NCO and Rivard is one of the battery mechanics. They conducted a technical inspection of the three trucks, and a good thing they did, because one of them had a bad transmission. The Iraqi police officers were happy to receive two trucks which have allowed them to more aggressively pursue the criminals in the area and thus facilitate the restoration of law and order.

As I have said before, our day in day out mission is commanding and controlling three battalions providing various security mission here in southern Iraq.

Our tactical operations center is a 24-hour operation and is the central nervous system of the brigade. Staff Sgt. Drina Nadeau from Suncook, one of our NCOs who works in the TOC, has a unique family relationship with the 197<sup>th</sup> FA. Two of her uncles, Thomas Nadeau and Omar Nadeau served in the 197<sup>th</sup> FA during WWII when it deployed to the Pacific. Nadeau's job is the movement control NCOIC for the brigade. This is a critical position in the TOC. She tracks the status of routes our convoys drive and monitors levels of enemy activity and road conditions on them. Nadeau also prepares the convoy requests and monitors their progress; she tracks convoys from the Kuwaiti border all the way to Baghdad. Nadeau has also served as the operations NCOIC on occasion due to her professionalism and ability to handle higher levels of responsibility.

Other key NCOs that work in our TOC include Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Ken Boufford from Dover, Sgt. Anthony Damata from Merrimack, and Staff Sgt. Daniel Beliveau from Manchester.

Boufford was one of our Force Protection NCOICs and supervised the Sergeants of the Guard and guard towers protecting Camp Cedar. Boufford has recently become one of our operations NCOICs.

Beliveau and Damata are both Force Protection NCOICs on different shifts. Their job requires them to work closely with all army units and civilian contractors on Camp Cedar to ensure we maintain a high level of defense. They have spearheaded the development of the base defense plan and have been instrumental in identifying and ensuring deficiencies were corrected in our force protection status.

All of our soldiers are working hard to ensure our mission is successful. They have endured the hottest part of the year and the stress from the ever present insurgent threat with ease. The soldiers have done a fantastic job and we have made it through our first six months, and we can now say our tour here is half done. We know our families and communities back home support, and we are grateful for that support.



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

***Capt. Matt Boucher**, of Barrington, is commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit consists of four platoons each of which is conducting a variety of security missions. The unit is known as "White Mountain Thunder"*

*From Capt. David Pearson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Leader, of Billerica, Mass:* Members of 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon have kept busy this summer by working with the United States Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and Iraqi police performing military police duties in the city of Ba'Qubah, the capital of Diyala Province, Iraq.

In addition to working with a platoon from the 4/293<sup>rd</sup> MP Company of the 3rd Infantry Division to provide security to the provincial police headquarters, our soldiers also investigate insurgent activity and local crimes. Their efforts have led to uncovering large weapons caches and the apprehension of insurgents in the Ba'Qubah area.

Squads from both platoons responded to a car bombing, referred to as a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), in Ba'Qubah on July 28, which claimed the lives of 68 Iraqis. They provided security at the scene and assisted with local emergency workers. The following day, two squads from 2nd Platoon helped to provide security for Iraqi government officials as they came to Ba'Qubah to examine the site of the blast and to visit survivors in a local hospital.

This summer the soldiers at the Ba'Qubah station continue to instruct the local police academy, helping to build a modern police department in the province. While not in the classroom or baking in the sun at their guard posts, members of 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon spend long hours on the road traveling daily to nearby forward operation bases, known as FOBs, to pick up supplies and equipment and to handle logistical issues.

Recent promotions include Staff Sgt. James Chesnis, of Ashland; Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Charles Nolting, of Barton, VT; and me, Capt. Pearson. All of us are from B Battery 2/197<sup>th</sup> FA, of Plymouth and Woodsville. Spec. Kevin Scott of Arundel, ME was also promoted.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon update by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert Haynes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Sergeant, of Berlin:* Well, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon (Bladerunners) were busy for the last month working with the 2-3 Stryker Battalion as they conducted several raids on surrounding cities as well as within the city of Mosul.

These raids were in conjunction with the Iraqi National Guard (ING) and were designed to capture weapons and Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) operating in the area.

3<sup>rd</sup> platoon continues to conduct 24-hour patrols within the city limits of Mosul. While patrolling, these squads stop and inspect the Iraqi Police stations on the east side of town to ensure that the police are equipped to handle the situations that arise within the city.

Sgt. Alexander Thurston, of Gilford, was recently promoted.

*4<sup>th</sup> Platoon update by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert E. Teague, 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon Leader, South Berwick, ME:* 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon continues its mission of providing security to the Iraqi Police Academy in Tikrit, Iraq.

The trend continues toward shifting security responsibilities to the Iraqi Police Force and further development of the physical defenses of the academy. The teaching portion of the academy is now run by Iraqi instructors. Eight hundred and thirty students have graduated from the academy's Transition Integration Program since we arrived in Iraq. These students will carry with them an awareness of democratic policing techniques that will aid in establishing a permanent security within the country of Iraq.

Our soldiers are performing their mission well. Hours of guard duty in the heat of the Iraqi summer have not diminished their focus. We continue to mentor the Iraqi police guards who are

taking a larger role in overall security. There has been a marked improvement in their initiative and vigilance; they now secure the front gate, searching vehicles and personnel.

We expect the Iraqi Police Force to be fully proficient by the time we depart from this mission.

*1<sup>st</sup> Platoon update by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Gregory J. Fillion, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Leader, of Littleton:* The soldiers of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon this past month continued conducting combat patrol escorts throughout the country of Iraq. We continue to move detainees from brigade detention facilities to division and corps facilities, as well as conduct transfer of detainees to the Iraqi police for crimes against the Iraqi people/government. These detainees are processed through the Iraqi court system.

We continue to provide convoy security to a variety of units to various locations in Iraq, many outside the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's area of responsibility. We also have continued to provide force protection for Forward Operating Base Danger as well as provide security for the weekly Abu Ghraib releases.

We also assisted in securing the site of the car bomb at the Iraqi Police Academy in Tikrit.

During the past month we escorted the former Chief of Staff of Saddam's elite Republican Guard to an undisclosed detention facility in Iraq for further processing. This individual had the dubious honor of being denoted as the "Jack of Clubs" on the infamous Iraqi Most Wanted playing cards published by the U.S. Department of Defense during Operation Iraqi Freedom I.

Recently promoted members include Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jonathan Cote of Dover and Spec. Aaron Whitcomb of Littleton as well as Staff Sgt. Brendan McKeage of Pittsburg and Sgt. Randall Whiting of North Stratford.

The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon have steadfastly performed all assigned missions with pride, determination and professionalism which reflect distinct credit upon themselves, their families, this unit and the New Hampshire Army National Guard.

*Support troops update, Staff Sgt. Doug Harvey, of Berlin:* It was another hot, busy month in Iraq for the support troops of 2-197<sup>th</sup> FA (MP). The support elements of this unit continued to perform integral roles in the successful completion of all unit tasks. Whether manning the 24-hour Tactical Operations Centers and Division Provost Marshal's Office at Division Headquarters in Tikrit or the Diayla Provisional Police Headquarters in Ba'Qubah; or turning the wrenches to ensure the unit's vehicles were properly maintained and operational; to providing the necessary supplies and resources for the company to function; or ensuring the unit's capability to communicate whether by radio or land line; to handling the daily personnel issues with running a 180-man company; all members of the support troops have performed there assigned missions admirably with remarkable skill, verve and panache.

Recent promotions include Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Christopher Guitard of Berlin, Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Adam Haley of North Conway, and Sgt. Mathew Henry of Berlin.

All members of "White Mountain Thunder" are serving with pride, devotion and dignity. We all look forward to a joyous reunion with our families and friends after successfully accomplishing our mission.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

*Capt. Eric Fessenden, of Windham is commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit arrived in Iraq in early March. The unit has been conducting security operations.*

1/172<sup>nd</sup> continues to execute our Military Police mission throughout southern Iraq and northern Kuwait.

We conduct convoy escort missions to as far north as Baghdad and south into Kuwait. Our soldiers also have become more involved with guarding detainees in the Camp Bucca Internment Facility. The 172<sup>nd</sup> continues to perform the security missions around Camp Bucca, which include manning guard towers, vehicle checkpoints and area patrols. As part of this camp security mission, we have established relationships with the Iraqi Police and the Iraqi National Guard and often conduct joint operations with them.

For instance, last week we detained two Iraqis that attempted to hijack a civilian vehicle in one of our convoys. Sgt. Stephen Hurst's (Salisbury, Mass.) team brought the two men to a local Iraqi police station and then worked with the police officers to gather evidence to prosecute these criminals.

The Iraqi forces are very interested in expanding these joint patrols and working with us to help improve their capabilities. Finally, we have developed strong ties with the British forces in our area, and we work with them often to share intelligence and respond to any enemy threats.

While the unit has performed its various military police missions in a professional manner, there are certain individual soldiers that have received special recognition for their performances.

The following 172<sup>nd</sup> soldiers have recently received well-deserved promotions: Sgt. Shawn Colburn, of Merrimack; Sgt. Kevin Harvey, of Milford; Cpl. Eric Brault, of Manchester; Cpl. Dwayne Dupont, of Lowell, Mass; Spec. Marc Whitney, of Farmington; Spec. Sean Burnette, of Somersworth; Spec. Wayne Durant, of Farmington; Spec. Travis Webber, of Eliot, ME; Spec. Paul Emond, of Nashua; Spec. David Turner, of Nashua; Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Randy King, of Nashua; and Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Michael Trumble, of Manchester.

Several soldiers have also received 16<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade Commander's coins from the Brigade Commander: Staff Sgt. Edward Demers, of Nashua; Dupont; Cpl. Guy Grafton, of Nashua; Spec. Wayne Comtois, of Wilton; Spec. Joseph Tessier, of Newmarket; and Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class David Jusino of Hudson. Finally, Staff Sgt. William Fish, of Concord, received a Commander's coin from Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, the Deputy Commander for Detainee Operations, for the incredible effort and initiative he has shown in personally upgrading Camp Bucca's perimeter defense. This was only the fourth coin that Gen. Miller had given out to any soldier in this theater.

As we enter our seventh month on the ground in Iraq, I remain proud of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Marauders and all that we are accomplishing. Our soldiers interact with the locals in this area on a daily basis, and the Iraqi's appreciate the respect and safety that we provide them. As an example, a recent security patrol led by Staff Sgt. Lewis Sowers, of Nashua, came across a 4-year-old girl with a severe ear infection. The patrol came back to the base and brought Spec. Stephen Marcucio, a platoon medic, of Seymour, CT, out to treat the little girl to the best of his ability and provide some pain relief. American soldiers demonstrate this type of caring and compassion on a daily basis, and the Iraqis know that our presence here will improve their lives.

### **Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade**

*Maj. Ralph Huber, of Dover, is team leader of 17 NH Army National Guard soldiers representing different units and specialties in Afghanistan to provide mentorship to Afghan National Army in a variety of fields to include transportation, ordnance, signal, logistics, medical, maintenance, supply, personnel and motor pool operations.*

Things here are going well and the team's morale is really high. We are going through our growing pains as is expected. All part of the process.

We met our Afghan counterparts. It was a real interesting event. My first assessment of my counterpart is that he is a good man, dedicated to his country, and a professional officer.

They all seem eager to please and to learn. Afghan culture is unique though. Things here are not always as they seem and you have to watch your step. There is always an angle and Afghan's always hedge their bets. As soldiers they are learning. They have a unique warrior culture. They take pride in their ability to handle weapons and fight. It is very close to the ancient codes of honor and chivalry. They are a proud people and very tough. They learn fast.

The upcoming elections are the focus of most mission planning at this point. When we do deploy, our mission changes somewhat from trainers to advisors. Our commander, who commands our camp, says that we are the "poor man's Special Forces" since this is a traditional Special Force mission. For our part, we take great pride in that.

This is no doubt one of the most important missions in Afghanistan. It is one of the main efforts in this country. Every member of the team takes great pride in that. It is not often that National Guard soldiers get to be at the very forefront of the army's missions.

**END**